



May 29, 1967

MEMORANDUM

From: William A. Mercer, Coordinator
To: The BICC Executive Committee
Re: BICC/City of Newark

From all indications, the City of Newark stands ready to explode. The events centered around the location of the medical school in the Central Ward; appointment of a new secretary to the Board of Education; the crisis of the anti-poverty agency United Community Corporation soon to be without its five top people; the proposed Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), plus general up-coming events such as the Black Power Conference due here July 20 - 23 and the basing of new, militantly-directed Black Nationalist organizations within our midst, confirms the tenseness of the current situation.

It is true the BICC image of moderate, middle class business and industry orientation and waning leadership from civil rights groups is deserved. It is also true that the BICC's two experimental manpower programs are the only projects that have actually reached hard core unemployed and under-employed adults with significant results. BICC outreach has been truly community directed. Its contact with the total community enabled your Coordinator to be present and actively involved in major controversial issues leading up to the current crisis. This includes the selection of the new Board of Education Secretary (Wilbur Parker vs. James Callaghan); the College of Medicine and Dentistry site; Model Cities Program; plight of the United Community Corporation; Concentrated Employment Program; and general unrest manifested by a coalition of old civil rights groups and the emergence of new ones; the National Conference on community unrest held last month in New York; the upcoming Businessmen's Unity Bazaar sponsored by Muslim Mosque No. 25, and a Black Power Conference to be held here in July is but a part of this overall involvement.

On Friday, May 26, 1967, in Washington, D. C., I communicated to the Community Relations Service, U. S. Department of Justice, my feelings regarding the tense situation in Newark. I can assure you this crisis is real. There is eminent danger of violent upheaval if some kind of immediate positive steps are not taken. I recommend that the BICC give quick consideration to undertaking the following things at our May 29th meeting.

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- 1) Join in a planned summer program patterned after that being implemented by Mayor John Lindsay in New York City. Also draw upon the experience of last summer's Central Ward Summer Festival. Several months ago I requested the Newark Human Rights Commission undertake the Summer Festival idea and expand upon it with our assistance. We do not have the staff to handle the lion's share of all the duties again.
- 2) Send representatives to the National Black Power Conference. At the very least, Gibson, Mercer, Proctor, and Means ought to be in attendance as official BICC representatives.
- 3) Prepare a written public statement endorsing Wilbur Parker for Secretary of the Newark Board of Education.
- 4) Convene a meeting with the Greater Newark Chamber of Commerce, and later with representatives of the major civil rights programs to establish a planned communications link. This group then ought to meet as soon as possible with re-established ad hoc groups similar to those set up in previous summers by Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio and James A. Pawley. If these groups are not now in being, I strongly urge the BICC Executive Committee request they be formed immediately.
- 5) Undertake an assessment as to who are legitimate community spokesmen to insure that they are included in the above activities.

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